



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File #: 25-01002**

**Agenda Date: 1/27/2026**

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**Agenda Item Name:**

**Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two Tract Option Contract to Purchase Real Property**

**Presenter:**

Andi Christman, Land Conservation Program Manager – Environmental Protection Dept., (352) 264-6803

**Description:**

Staff Requests the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approve and exercise the attached Option Contract to Purchase the 521.62-acre Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two Real Property from Lessie Q. Rimes, through the Alachua County Forever program.

The execution of this Contract to purchase Real Property, is the final BoCC action on the acquisition of this project.

**Recommended Action:**

1. Approve and authorize the Chair to execute the Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two, assignable, Option Contract to purchase Real Property in substantially the form attached (Exhibit 1); and
2. Approve and Authorize Chair to exercise the Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two Option Contract to purchase Real Property, subject to the County's rights to conduct due diligence inspections and notice Seller of Title Defects and Environmental Defects as set forth in the Contract; and
3. Delegate to the County Manager the authority to decide whether to accept or reject title exceptions (#5, #6, #7, #8, and other (Possibly to be #9)) based on the County Manager's evaluation as to whether said title exceptions will substantially impair the County's proposed use of the property; and
4. Delegate to the County Manager the authority to decide whether to close the acquisition subject to title exceptions (#5, #6, #7, #8, and Other (Possibly to be #9)) based on the County Manager's evaluation as to whether said title exceptions will substantially impair the County's proposed use of the property; and
5. Approve and authorize the Manager to execute the Assignment to Alachua Conservation Trust for all or a portion of the Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two Real Property in substantially the form attached (Exhibit 2) as needed for North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant award;

and

6. Authorize staff to execute additional documents as necessary to close the transaction.

**Prior Board Motions:**

Enter On October 24, 2006, the BoCC placed Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two property on the Active Acquisition List (Full Price List).

On June 28, 2022, the BoCC adopted Resolution 22-66 amending the process for selecting and acquiring Environmentally Significant Lands purchased using Wild Spaces and Public Places local government infrastructure surtax proceeds. This authorizes the acquisition of lands through fee simple and less-than-fee means and provides the process for such.

On July 8, 2025, the BoCC approved and authorized the Chair to sign two North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant documents to complete Alachua Conservation Trust’s (Phase 5) grant application submittal, for the Les-Que Two (Cow Hammock) property: 1) Partner Contribution Statement and 2) Matching Contribution Plan Statement. If awarded, the grant would provide reimbursement funding for a portion of the acquisition costs.

**Fiscal Note:**

The Department requested \$6,042,425 to complete this acquisition.

\$5,395,000 (+10% contingency) Fund #: 140.41.4160.537.61.00 (Land)

Project: 6194101 WSPP-Land Acquisition: Lochloosa Connector: Les-Que Two  
&

\$98,114 (+10% contingency) Fund #: 140.41.4160.537.31.00 (Professional Services)

Project 6184160-General Operating & Due Diligence

Please see Exhibit 7 (Acquisition and Stewardship Costs) for additional details.

**Strategic Guide:**

Environment,

**Background:**

The 521.62-acre Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two property was nominated to the Alachua County Forever program on February 13, 2006, and was added to the Active Acquisition List on June 27, 2006. Staff has negotiated the attached Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two Option Contract to Purchase Real Property (Option). (Exhibit 1) The Option has been executed by the Manager on January 22, 2026. The Option requires transmittal of a signed Notice of Exercise of Option by the BoCC Chair, to the Sellers by May 27, 2026, the date the option period ends. (Exhibit 3).

The Option allows the County to assign a portion of the property to be purchased by Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT). ACT and the County will utilize the Assignment, (Exhibit 2) if ACT is awarded a North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant that they have applied for to support the property acquisition. ACT will fill out and execute the applicable exhibits to the Assignment prior to execution by the County. The partial assignment would enable the acquisition footprint to meet the grant award standards.

During the Inspection Period, the County shall have 120 days after the BOCC exercises its Option to conduct all due diligence on the property. The County may exercise its rights to resolve any due diligence matters pursuant to the terms of the contract within those 120 days and to extend the closing

date if necessary.

The Les-Que Two property (ACPA Tax Parcel: 18354-059-000) totaling 521,62 acres is located in southeastern portion of Alachua County, in the Cross Creek Area between Orange and Lochloosa Lakes, on the eastern shore of Orange Lake. The property is within the second highest-ranked ACF project area, the Lochloosa Forest-Levy Prairie Connector Project Area, having a REPA score of 8.18 out of 9.44, but is not within a specific Strategic Ecosystem footprint. The property is in the Florida Wildlife Corridor, Orange Creek Basin Surface Water Improvement and Management Plan and the Cross Creek Special Study Area. The Les-Que Two parcel is also directly across CR325 from the St. John's River Water Management District's Lochloosa Wildlife Conservation Area, and less than 0.5 mile south of Majorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park.

The Les-Que Two property supports at least six different natural communities including, basin marsh, upland mixed forest, mesic flatwoods, depression marsh, basin swamp, xeric hammock and improved pasture. The majority of the property is currently managed for cattle grazing on the open pastureland. The parcel extends into Orange Lake and has approximately 2 miles of shoreline on Orange Lake with an expansive scenic view of the lake and of sunsets. Orange Lake is both an Outstanding Florida Water & on the FDEP's list of impaired water bodies. Removing the cattle and restoring select areas of the property will help reduce the nutrient loading of Orange Lake. Also, the property would be suitable for a wide variety of nature-based recreational opportunities.

Other than the pasture grasses groundcover in portions of the uplands, minimal invasive species were observed during the Les-Que Two site visits. The property has two older modest residential structures in fair to poor condition. The property also has the remnants of the legacy private "Rimes Lakecrest Airstrip" on it. The grass airstrip is not currently registered/licensed or approved for the required County re-zoning or special exception necessary to function as an airstrip. Some historic moderate ditching and berm creation exists on the property. Additional information can be found in the attached property evaluation. (Exhibit 4 & 5).

In support to the County acquisition efforts, Alachua Conservation Trust has applied for a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant to provide potential reimbursement of a portion of acquisition costs for this property. If the NAWCA grant is awarded, grant standards may require the partial assignment of the option contract to ACT; including for the property footprint with the structures and the sovereign submerged lands footprint. For that reason, authorization of the Manager to execute the Assignment to Alachua Conservation Trust for all or a portion of the Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two Real Property is recommended.

There are no Permitted Exceptions in the Les-Que Two Option Contract, but these non-standard Title Exceptions are noted: (#5, #6, #7, #8 & Other (Possibly to be #9)):

#5. All matters contained on the Plat of Hayman's Pasture, as recorded in Plat Book A, Page 138, Public Records of Alachua County, Florida. This is an undeveloped plat which overlaps with a portion of the property.

#6. Reservations in favor of the State of Florida, as set forth in the deed from the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund of the State of Florida, recorded in Deed Book 198, Page 334, Public Records of Alachua County, Florida. These reservations include a 100 foot wide Right of Way on County Road 325.

#7. Coverage is excepted as to riparian and littoral rights; the possible right of the public to use beach

area and/or waterways; and any Land insured herein that was formerly or is currently submerged, including any filled lands, artificially exposed lands, and lands accreted to such lands, for the rights of the United States Government and the State of Florida. If the Navigational Servitude Endorsement is attached to this policy and made a part hereof, the coverage afforded thereby shall not extend to any portion of the Land subject to a claim of ownership by the State of Florida by right of sovereignty. Commitment exception #3 is hereby deleted in its entirety.

#8. Any and all adverse consequences relating to or resulting from the airstrip located on the subject property.

Other (Possibly to be #9). Not in initial Title Commitment: Unrecorded 1947 utility easement, in favor of Clay Electric Cooperative, Inc. The electric line and twenty-foot-wide easement run parallel along the dirt access road, leading to the residential homes on subject parcel, originating from County Road 325. In addition, there is a utility line that runs parallel with County Road 325 that is on the subject property.

Some of the title exceptions are expected to be deleted prior to closing based on additional title examination or the survey. (Exhibit 6)

Legal and functional access on the Les-Que Two parcel is provided through its northeastern road frontage along South County Road 325.

A boundary survey, phase I environmental assessment and home inspections are the next steps of due diligence that will be initiated after the Option is Exercised by Alachua County. Closing transactions would occur once there has been a determination by the County Manager that there are no title, survey, or environmental defects.

Comp Plan Reference:

Acquiring the Lochloosa Connector – Les-Que Two fulfills multiple objectives endorsed within the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, Policy 6.0 Land Conservation Program within the Conservation and Open Space Element, states “Establish and maintain a land conservation program for the purchase, preservation, and management of natural areas and open space to complement the regulatory approaches identified in other section of this element.”